



The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF PAUL VI TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UPPER VOLTA**

Monday, 18 June 1973

Mr. President,

This meeting today, the solemn character of which is intended to express the value attached to it on our side and on yours, also affords the opportunity to express the joy we feel at receiving Your Excellency. You show, Mr. President, great open-mindedness, care to respect legitimate aspirations and requests wherever they may come from, and constant concern for the vital problems of development and peace.

Allow us furthermore, through you, to greet all the inhabitants of your country. We often think of them, of their courage in overcoming geographical vicissitudes, their ardour in the great enterprise of improving living conditions, their struggle to bring your country to greater prosperity. We also think of the different races to which they belong; this could become, more than a problem sometimes difficult to solve, an incomparable quality of civilization, one of the elements of this human harmony which makes the greatness of a State. We think, finally, of the really religious spirit that can be seen in your people and more especially among the young Catholic community, animated by Cardinal Zoungrana, the first Cardinal of West Africa. Enjoying toleration and freedom, the dynamism of this community can be held up as an example to a great many Christians.

Undoubtedly, through your visit, it is the whole of Upper Volta that fills our heart. Our affection and pastoral solicitude turn towards it. Beyond it, we can see the vast African continent, promising, hopeful, which we once went to bless and encourage at Kampala.

How, then, could we fail to recall, before this horizon, the lines of conduct that the Church proposes to follow to serve man and the whole of man? If her first function is a spiritual one, she

cannot dissociate herself from the promotion of the person or the transformation of his framework of life. She endeavours, therefore, to contribute to the construction of a better world, in the certainty that the latter is an integral part of the divine plan. Thus she is led to support, sometimes, such and such a temporal project; she always tries to work its favour of social justice; she sees, furthermore, in sincere participation in the effort to provide schools or permanent education, an eminent aim for the capabilities at her disposal.

But the task that the Holy See, on behalf of the Church, must also carry out, to the extent of her possibilities, is to draw the attention of authorities and awaken the conscience of Christians in all countries, when there arises in the world one of these alarming and often unforeseeable problems which must be solved at once, with all the means within reach, if we wish to ensure the survival of populations. In this connection, the terrible catastrophe of the drought that has stricken West Africa which moves us so deeply, must not leave anyone indifferent. It calls for considerable resources to be found, for everything to be done to permit the distribution of the aid, and finally for long term studies to be made on how to avoid in the future the disastrous consequences of such a calamity. As soon as we were informed of the extent of the damage, we made earnest appeals for assistance. Again quite recently we invited our Cardinal Secretary of State, who is at the same time the President of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum", to coordinate promptly and effectively the initiatives of Catholic welfare organizations, in order to speed up and make the best use of their intervention to alleviate the sufferings of so many innocent victims. We hope with all our heart that this will contribute, in the united effort of world solidarity, to meeting at least the most urgent necessities and rekindling hope.

Concluding these words of welcome, we express our certainty that the understanding and bonds of friendship between Upper Volta and the Holy See will become even closer. If it were necessary to put forward a proof, mention could be made of the recent joint decision to set up diplomatic relations, an instrument of dialogue, which will certainly be seen to be most advantageous. In this assurance, we willingly invoke the abundance of the blessing of Almighty God on Your Excellency, on the high personalities who accompany you and on the noble nation of Volta.

*ORa n.27 p.3.